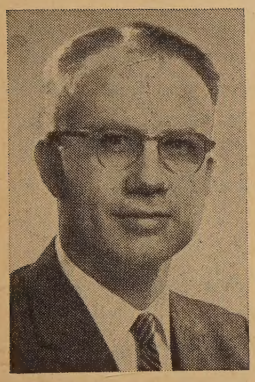
The Pulpit

A Journal of Contemporary Preaching



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Ronald E. Osborn:

Christmas Belongs

David A. MacLennan • Survival Kit
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George W. Forell • The Gospel of Peace
David G. Buttrick • The Book Nobody Knows
Lawrence K. Whitfield • Out of the Bleachers!
Oswald C. J. Hoffmann • Time to Wake Up

B. DAVIE NAPIER
GOLDEN WHISPER OF A MIRACLE

VOL. XXX, No. 12 DECEMBER 1959

The Pulpit

Founded 1929 by Charles Clayton Morrison as a journal of contemporary preaching.

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35 cents single issue.
$4 a year in U.S.A. and Canada.
$4.50 foreign.

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Second-class postage paid at Chicago, Ill., and at additional mailing offices.

Published monthly by the Christian Century Foundation, 407 S. Dearborn St., Chicago 5, Ill. HArrison 7-5380.

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Christmas Prayer

O THOU who didst send the Christ child in the fullness of time, open our hearts to receive this One who changed the face of history. Let the experience of this service take us again back through the paths of time. When we cannot grasp the fact, help our imaginations to lay hold on the story and make it live.

Help us to remember that many followers of this Bethlehem babe will find it difficult to worship him. Many are hungry through no fault of their own. While we worship in comfort and warmth, their bodies are cold. In bitterness they have lost the capacity to love. God, are they bitter because of *us?* Do they hate their fellow man because of us? Help us so to love them by our deeds that they may know that this is thy world.

Incite us to act in this season. Let it not pass without giving ourselves to deeds of mercy and errands of love. Let not the day mock us. Help us lay hold on the good will generated by Jesus' birth that we may soften the wrath of those who misunderstand their fellow man and need to hate their brothers.

Help us so to love that in our time the angel chorus may fill the heavens again. Amen. — *Fred E. Luchs, First Congregational Church, Ann Arbor, Michigan.*

The Pulpit

A Journal of Contemporary Preaching

VOLUME XXX DECEMBER 1959 No. 12

Memo:

IN the program listings for November 1-7 in the *Chicago Sun-Times TV Prevue* Paul Molloy, television critic, inspired by Lowell Thomas' famous upset of the "This Is Your Life" applecart, gets off a list of nineteen perspective producing events that he would like to see "just once." For instance: ". . . just once I'd like to see the Lone Ranger doff his mask and trill: 'Help stamp out Halloween.'" Having not yet recovered from answering the door twenty-five times during the dinner hour to hordes of variously arrayed lovable little scavengers on October 31, I thrill to that trill. And with another frantic Christmas coming on — well, who among us doesn't have a part of him that deliciously desires Santa Claus to whip off his beard and blurt out similar heart-cleansing sentiment?

Come to think of it, there were quite a few rather breath-taking moments of truth this year. Vice-President Richard Nixon and Soviet Prime Minister Nikita Khrushchev sparred into a lively exchange in Russia that had all of the surprise excitement of a couple of late-night television wrestlers suddenly deciding to play for keeps. And then Khrushchev took a turn around the United States; for all of the propaganda and counter-propaganda, the American public got a real look-see at the Russian version of a beloved American myth: the shipping clerk who became president of the company. In fact, nobody in a long time has reminded me so much of the old-style business tycoon, loaded with power and unrestrained confidence, as did Mr. K. "Meanwhile, back at the ranch" a golf course in Scotland inadvertently gave out President Eisenhower's score (an 88, wasn't it?) and the New York Yankees shocked the world with the news that they not only could be had, they could be badly beaten.

As if this wasn't enough, TV's quiz game scandal mounted into a spectacular climax with Charles Van Doren's dramatic disclosure that he had all along been "involved, deeply involved, in a deception." His thirteen-page prepared statement is certainly a classic of some sort, telling as it does the tale of events involving the manipulation of great powers by human beings who didn't quite get away with it and expressing a personal poignancy that echoes the tragic dimension of a major Shakespearean character. The irony is that in a way the quiz programs faithfully re-enacted the format that very often passes for education: being fed answers so that they may be returned to the proper authorities at the proper time with an appropriate agony. Of course, we can't omit the statement of the Reverend Charles E. Jackson, a Tullahoma, Tennessee, preacher who testified that he was strongly tempted during an appearance on "$64,000 Challenge" on December 29, 1957, to blurt out the truth that it was rigged. He resisted the temptation, and so the truth was told at last in congressional hearing, but wouldn't that have been a prize item for the "just once I'd like to see" collection?

Speaking of preachers, the conductor of the choir in one of our famous Protestant cathedrals recently said: "I've listened to thousands of sermons and have heard about five good ones. Preaching is a lost art." This man was no unwashed amateur but a seasoned pro in matters musical, liturgical and ecclesiastical; he knew authentic and telling excitement when he heard it, and he knew when he didn't hear it — which apparently was much of the time. Also, the observation was not essentially disrespectful of the art of preaching; when I responded, "Yes, but when it's great, it's really great!" he assented vigorously. Most arresting of all, though, was the sheer unsettling ring of truth that reverberated from that whisper at the back of the nave.

But then this is not entirely a new worry. Samuel Miller, new dean of Harvard Divinity School, in his convocation address reminds us that "testy old Carlyle, in all his flamboyance" perceived similar trouble when he declared: "That a man stand there and speak of spiritual things to me, it is beautiful; even in its great obscurity and decadence it is among the beautifulest, most touching objects one sees on this earth. This speaking man has indeed, in these times, wandered terribly from the point; has, alas, as it were, totally lost sight of the point, yet at bottom whom have we to compare with him? Of all such functionaries boarded and lodged on this industry of modern Europe, is there one worthier of the board he has? . . . The speaking function, with all our writing and printing function, has a perennial place, could he but find the point again!"

Happy doffing and trilling. — May the point of Advent be ours to find again. EDWARD W. WARNER

The Peace Given at the Birth of Jesus Strengthens the Soul to Wage Life

Christmas Belongs In Our Kind of World

By Ronald E. Osborn

Now . . . Jesus was born . . . in the days of Herod the king. . . . Matthew 2:1.

And . . . the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them. . . . Luke 2:6-9.

IDEALLY this is a season of holy expectation which the church calls Advent. Actually it is a time of frantic activity, with only a few more shopping days till Christmas. Stores keep late hours, postal employees work overtime, public address systems blat scratchy records of "Jingle Bells" and "Away in a Manger" for the thousandth time since Thanksgiving. Every social club is having a gift exchange, every church and school and cultural group a Christmas program, every welfare organization a seasonal project. Nearly every family is going somewhere or expecting guests. Housewives are up to their elbows in cake mix or wrapping paper. Tired men struggle home to sign the final batch of Christmas cards. Lights burn late, hours race by, and more than one tired clerk dares to utter the words he cannot help feeling are blasphemous: "I'll be glad when it's over." Many a pastor these next few days will hear a weary workman or a fatigued parent sigh, "Somehow it just doesn't seem like Christmas."

It is not just the strain that appears incongruous, although that is enough. (I have a colleague who paraphrases Hebrews 12:1 to read, "Let us run with patience the ratrace that is set before us.") The whole state of the world seems out of keeping with the festival of holy childhood and peace on earth. The bleakness of totalitarian winter from central Europe to the Bering Sea; revolution, violence, fanatical hatred and impossible hopes in the Middle East; starvation in Asia; ballistic missiles blasting off from Cape Canaveral; atomic weapons ready for instant use — all this and much more frustrate the man of goodwill or even the man whose major avowed concern remains his own skin. We look at the headlines and again we murmur, "It just doesn't seem like Christmas."

At this point we ask, "Just what would seem like Christmas?" What does our inner sense of fitness tell us that this festival ought to be? The answer we commonly assume to our question finds expression in our sentimental secular "carol" written for homesick soldiers in World War II, "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas." Here is the nostalgia of a boy away from home — in the mud of a southern training camp, the dust of North Africa, the rain of Italy, the tropical forest of the South Pacific, on a tossing destroyer or rolling aircraft carrier far out at sea, in the bitterness of the Battle of the Bulge. His thoughts turn toward home, yet not to what home now is. They weave a romantic spell of security and peace, of childhood bliss, of premechanical simplicities, of bright promises and merry hearts, of the unspoiled beauty of new-fallen snow.

> May your days be merry and bright,
> And may all your Christmases be white.

Surely one reason for the popularity of this song is its forthright expression of the common feeling about Christmas. We think of it as a day or a season lifted out of the normal course, a retreat from reality to the world as we would have it. So when "the world is too much with us," when our own pattern of life becomes hectic or the general state of humanity deteriorates, we can only say, "It just doesn't seem like Christmas."

It is precisely here that we need to turn from Tin Pan Alley to the Word of God. For the gospel assures us that Christmas belongs in our kind of

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world. "Now . . . Jesus was born . . . in the days of Herod the king," in hard and cruel times, not in the mellow days of Old King Cole or an imaginary golden age in the world's lost childhood. "And she . . . laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." Christmas celebrates the birth of him who is one with the lonely and the outcast, the homeless refugee, the soldier on distant duty, the political prisoner, the Little Match Girl shivering in the cold. Christmas brings us to a rude stable and a manger. It is not a day or a season lifted out of the normal course, a retreat from reality to the world as we think we would have it. Rather, it is an announcement that the eternal God, with all the blessings of his gospel, comes to us in the very sort of world in which our existence is cast. Christmas belongs in our kind of world.

Workaday Responsibility

Christmas belongs in our world of workaday responsibility. For all of our labor-saving devices, automation, holidays and vacations with pay, we live in a world where labor is the price of life and the responsibility of love. And though we often find release from tension and even creative expression in our work, it can also be drudgery, with its clamant demands, its inescapable chores, its oppressing weariness. Life with its brightness beckons to us like the dream of a white Christmas, but we cannot answer. Tonight and every night thousands of men and women who would like to be in the warmth of the family circle or under the bright lights of gaiety are not there. They are on the job — truckers and railroaders and seamen and pilots cutting through the darkness, the boys on the swing shift, soldiers on sentry duty, nurses on night call, scholars pressing a reluctant day for one more precious hour, charwomen cleaning lonely office buildings, leaders of government confronting another crisis, policemen, firemen, watchmen. Drive through your city at two o'clock in the morning, and an upstairs light still burning will set you wondering about some poor sufferer or a mother waiting by the bedside of a child. No one wants it that way, but "that's the way it is."

"And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them." Not to the Eastern sages in their contemplations, not to Simeon and Anna in the temple, not to Herod in his palace nor to the mayor of Bethlehem, but to the humble toilers of the night did the Christmas message come first of all. The real meaning of the salvation this day brings is not of miraculous removal from our daily responsibility to some never-never land of pure delight. Instead it is the joy of knowing the love of God in the midst of life's responsibilities, the sacredness of work hallowed by the Incarnation, God's redemptive presence at the point where life is really lived.

> When came in flesh the incarnate Word,
> The heedless world slept on,
> And only simple shepherds heard
> That God had sent his Son.

The true meaning of Christmas is not spoken by the brief spell in which the tree with its gay lights adds a festive touch to our homes and offices and the brilliant poinsettia blooms. Rather we find it in the realization on the daily round that the eternal God has sought us in his grace, that he has made known toward us ordinary men his good pleasure.

And if it seems that these days which we would have peaceful and free are on the contrary crowded with extra pressures and obligations, let us observe how inescapably these are involved in the spirit of Christmas itself. For most of the added duties of this season — the programs to rehearse and to attend, the parties for children, the time given to hospitals and other institutions to make possible a day of brightness there, the late hours at home spent in baking and decorating and wrapping gifts, the evenings given over to the signing and addressing of Christmas cards, the overtime demanded of employees — all these are the price levied by love when we would give it special expression in the common life. This is not to say that every program turns out to be important or that some aspects of Yuletide commercialism could not better be dispensed with. But we need to remind ourselves that any worthy expression of love requires giving, and ultimately the gift of self. The extra activity of this season is not a denial of its spirit; it is an expression of what Christmas really means — the presence of God in our workaday world.

War and Rumors

Christmas belongs in our world of war, of injustice, of social evil. The birth of Jesus Christ has awakened in the hearts of men such daring hopes for peace and brotherhood that we find it painfully incongruous to celebrate his nativity when conflict rages or when rumors of war darken our horizon. How can one sing in such a time? It does not seem right. Yet, in just such a world the song of Christmas was first heard. "Now . . . Jesus was born . . . in the days of Herod" — surely an unpropitious time for the advent of a Savior. Note how Luke sets the beginning of his ministry in its historical context: in the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor, Herod Antipas and Philip and Lysanias holding the fat political appointments, Annas and Caiaphas being high priests — scarcely a promising day for religion. By all this the evangelist emphasizes not only that ours is a historic faith, deriving from events in time, but also that it was born into just our kind of world.

(Continued on page 8)

By B. Davie Napier

GOLDEN WHISPER

THE poet Clement Wood has added a sonnet to the varied and innumerable creations of art that are clustered around the advent of Jesus Christ.

> So long ago, and not forgotten yet:
> Shall we remember other things as well
> As that faint whispered foreign syllable
> Of rapture which the winds of heaven met
> And bore like light from a sun quick to set
> To every lonely peak and crowded fell,
> That golden whisper of a miracle
> Men dare to know and do not dare forget?
>
> Shall all the sounding tempest of red war,
> The clangor of stern empire, the soft notes
> Of lovers, or the poet's lonely horn,
> Ring with a noise perpetual and far
> As that soft whisper out of heaven's throats
> That said, "Lo, unto you the Christ is born"?

It *was* a miracle, but we will do well to understand what kind of miracle it was. It was a golden whisper of a miracle — a miracle men dare to know and do not dare forget. It was, or better, it is a miracle in three closely related parts, no one of which has any meaning without the other two. It is a pre-event miracle, an event-miracle, and a post-event miracle.

A Pre-event Miracle

Long before the advent of Jesus Christ, Israel's first great historian dared to know the event and with equal daring refused to forget it. We know nothing about him save what he wrote, and in Aristotle's understanding of the term we should call him a poet, not a historian. Aristotle's historian was a mere chronicler of sequential events; his poet, one who distilled from the chronological catalogue its essence, its universal judgment and meaning. Israel's earliest poet-historian extracted the deepest meaning of the history he surveyed and expressed that meaning in the divine call of Abraham in the words, "In you shall all the families of the earth be blessed." This is part of the pre-event miracle answered in the miracle event in the words of the angel, "I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people!"

Christ was first born in the devoted and inspired human imagination — an imagination informed by the history of events in which God was seen and known to be working for his own ultimate purposes.

Another poet, and no less in the broader sense a historian, was another anonymous interpreter of events who wrote what we know as the servant poems of the Old Testament preserved for us now in parts of chapters 42-53 of the book of Isaiah. Here too we see the nature of the pre-event miracle of Christ — events, this time tragic events, distilled in meaning and signifying hope, profound and positive hope. This poet-historian hears the servant of God, that servant who is himself the end event toward which Israel's history moves — he hears the servant speaking:

> The Lord who formed me from the womb says to me — it is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the preserved of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.

This is the golden whisper of a miracle, God's miracle of grace and salvation, a miracle men dared to know even before the event itself, a miracle men have never dared forget.

The post-event miracle is not different in substance from the pre-event miracle. To be sure, in the Old Testament the divine act in which all history is to be judged and understood is anticipated while in the New Testament it has occurred. But it is derived in both, it is confirmed in both, it is known in both from the distillation of sequential events into essential meaning.

The Post-event Miracle

All of this is to say that if we want event a mere event we not only do not have it in the Bible we cannot get it. And one must say this now somewhat defiantly in the teeth of an apparently spreading neo-fundamentalism. In defense of the proposition that God acts in biblical history, this latter-day literalism insists that what is recorded is of theological necessity uniformly and consistently true in actual historical detail; that truth and external event in the Bible are synonymous. For myself, and for example only, I very strongly doub

OF A MIRACLE

that Abraham, the man Abraham living sometime, probably, in the first half of the second millenium B.C., I doubt that this man, in the occurrence of his call, this real and external event — assuming, indeed, that there was such an event — I doubt that he himself interpreted his call in the divine words, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Indeed, as sheer event, that episode is quite lost to us without a chance in the world of recovering it. And if we could recover it, if we could know that we had recovered it, it might still be essentially false. That which the early Hebrew historian supplied centuries later to the story of the call of Abraham, while never a part of the event, is nevertheless true — absolutely true in my understanding of history and in that of countless millions from the 10th century B.C. to the 20th century A.D. In very truth in Abraham, through Christ, all families of the earth are blessed.

Fact and History

Or, we may look at another example of fallacy in the identification of truth and event in the author of the servant songs. I am certain that if I could get back to the time and place and person of the creator of those songs, I would find that he had some contemporary person, group or entity in mind when he wrote of the servant — perhaps Cyrus, or Zerubbabel, or the nation Israel, or perhaps a lad of the royalty of Judah. But in this case again the event itself as sheer event lies, for none of these — Cyrus, Zerubbabel, Israel, or any prince of Judah — none of these remotely fulfills historically the expectation of the servant songs.

As sheer event, by the same tokens, I myself doubt seriously that as sheer event the birth of Jesus occurred either as it is recorded in Matthew or in Luke. If we could get back to the bare facts of the occurrence — and it is important to say that we cannot — if we could get back to the sheer skeleton of the event of the birth, we should probably find that it occurred in Nazareth, not in Bethlehem, in a very simple Galilean home, not a stable; that it was attended by no supernatural celestial manifestations involving either stars or angels; and that neither Magi nor shepherds worshiped at the crib. We should probably find it to be a birth quite like other births that same night in the Near East, calling forth the common yet always uncommon physical and emotional responses that attend the emergence of a new human life.

But again the event as pure event is not true history. Matthew and Luke record interpretations of the event created in the poetic-historical mind, which returns from the observation of sequential events in the first Christian century the distilled essence, the universal meaning.

Total Advent

What is the truth of the advent of Christ to us who are a part still of the post-event miracle, who have known in some real measure the grace and peace of Jesus Christ, who on frequent occasions celebrate and symbolize this real communion? We have to say that it is the cold facts of the birth which are in essential error, not the stories. The facts of any given occurrence are obtainable only in a test tube, so to speak; and test-tube history is always in error precisely because it seeks to isolate what in the very nature of history cannot be isolated. If the birth of Jesus was in fact a common birth, it was not in truth a common birth. The birth of the little Jesus that night in Palestine was not in truth like the birth of the little Eliyahu, or the little Nathan on the same night and in the same country. The event-miracle of birth is at one with the pre-event miracle and the post-event miracle. In its universal meaning, this is the Bethlehem event. This event — the total advent — is the fulfillment of Israel's highest hopes that from the place and seed of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David all the nations of the earth should be blessed. This event

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is the answer, the divine answer, to the cry of the prophet centuries before: "But you, O Bethlehem . . . from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days." It was the advent of one despised and rejected of men, to be a man of sorrows and intimately acquainted with all human griefs. There was no room for this birth in the common habitations. It was in truth the event of Bethlehem and the event of a Bethlehem stable.

Jesus Christ is the central event around which in Christian faith all history revolves, the climactic event of all history, staggering the imagination and defying description. God, the Creator of the universe and the Judge of all men, is now the Redeemer, who so loved the world that he gave his own Son to reclaim it. In truth the very heavens, the work of God's fingers, the very stars which he ordained proclaimed the event; and at the birth, in truth, choirs of angels sang in exaltation.

And finally, at that birth, long before a pre-event miracle, or then in the miracle event, or now in the post-event miracle, the Magi and the shepherds, the wise and the simple, the wealthy and the poor come to pay homage to him who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. This is the golden whisper of a miracle men dare to know, and do not dare forget.

Christmas Belongs

(Continued from page 5)

It is in our very situation that Christmas belongs, with its assurance that God has not given up on man, that he keeps coming in judgment and forgiveness even where he is not wanted, that however bitter our need, he is ever at hand. An old German carol sings of the Christmas Rose, sprung from the stock of Jesse:

> It came, a flow'ret bright,
> Amid the cold of winter,
> When half spent was the night.

Christmas is the witness to God's undiscouraged faithfulness toward our kind of world: "The light shines in the darkness."

Christmas belongs in our world of personal frustration, anxiety, defeat, fear and sorrow. Again and again life fails to turn out as we would have it. We dream our bright dreams and toy with our fond hopes, but awaken in the gray dawn to find them dashed to bits. Then we rebel or grow sorry for ourselves and cry, "How can a good God let his world go on like this?" But we have the question turned backwards. For the world has ever gone on like this. From the beginning of history, man' condition has been much the same. The real won der of Christmas is that in this kind of world, Goc graciously comes to man and speaks of his love.

Consider that young mother-to-be, Mary, up rooted from her home, carried with the sea o humanity into Bethlehem, with no influence, nc reservations, no room — and her time upon her Surely she must have clung till the last moment tc the hope that the God who had awakened in he heart such ineffable dreams concerning her chilc would provide a worthy place for his birth. Bu no. "The time came . . . And she . . . laid him ir a manger, because there was no place for them ir the inn." Here was a mother, her heart bursting for joy as she brought to mankind God's greates gift, and a world without time or a decent plac for its Savior to be born. But still he came. Anc in the songs of rejoicing that attend his advent good news is proclaimed to those of low degree, tc the hungry, to those who fear him, to those who si in darkness and in the shadow of death. The peac which was given at the birth of Jesus is not thc miraculous cessation of all earthly hostilities, the re moval of all tragedy, nor yet the tentative euphoria of the rising suburbanite who has learned to man age his ulcers. It is the strength of soul given tc the man who knows that God has declared himsel in redeeming love, in everlasting mercy, in all sufficient grace.

Christmas belongs in our kind of world, for we are the kind of men who need its message. It doe not take us out of the world into some land o fantasy where no problems are to be faced. No does it bring facile solutions to our problems Rather it brings us the love of God which uphold us even when our problems find no answer. Anc that love is our deepest need.

Christmas Eve Prayer

As we stand upon the threshold of our Lord' birthday, may we be drawn into the orbit o his pure and holy love. Looking into the mange upon the ineffable loveliness of a pure infant, ma we become as little children in simple acceptanc of the faith which he engenders. May the angeli host's song of peace and goodwill be a perpetua song of peace and goodwill in our hearts. Bathec in the rays of the starlit night, may we becom forever alive with light and hope.

Send us forth from this transforming experienc renewed and rededicated by that spirit of love anc service which thy blessed Son has brought into th life of mankind. Amen. — *Chester E. Hodgson Kings Highway Methodist Church, Brooklyn, Nev York.*

God Provides Resources
To Achieve the Impossible

Survival Kit for Christians

By David A. MacLennan

IT COULD happen tomorrow. It may happen next year, or the year after. The world as we know it could end with a bang and a whimper. Naturally, normal persons dislike facing such gruesome possibilities. But normal Christians must think about possibilities both good and evil. We are under obligation to face all the facts including the facts which seem to deny our Christian faith and hope. Our nation and our chief opponent in the cold war each possess the weapons to destroy all human beings now alive. An undersecretary of Public Administration of the United Nations not given to scaring the daylights out of citizens, reported that each side in the present struggle has single bombs, each of which is more destructive than all the bombs dropped in all the years and in all the theaters of the Second World War added together. One of our present nuclear bombs would equal more than 1,000 of the A-bombs dropped on Hiroshima. An all-out bombing of the U.S.S.R. or of the U.S.A. and Canada in which hundreds of the modern bombs were employed might mean the end of all life in the countries concerned, without reckoning with the effects of fallout and radiation.

What shall we do? Certainly we who are called to God's purpose as this is disclosed in the life, teaching, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ cannot remain "objectively detached," stoical or indifferent. Another option is also denied us: we cannot engage in a kind of religious beatnik's indifference to the dangers inherent in both cold war and nuclear tests. We cannot play the "hot areas" or hot issues "real cool." Not and be followers of One who cared desperately what happened to God's children and whose sign is a cross on which He died to save the world of men and women, boys and girls.

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Should we dig in, literally? With considerable concern and courage the governor of New York State has urged that the building of bomb-proof, radiation-proof shelters be made compulsory. After he said, "If we're going to do this thing, everybody's got to do it or it's got no meaning," a secular writer made a sharp comment: "Perhaps the meaning will become clear only later, down in our prairie-dog holes, as we listen to the remembered sound of the wind."

Fatalistic Resignation

Making shelters for every family and individual in our teeming nation sounds fantastic. Certainly, judging by the response of Mr. and Mrs. John Q. Citizen, the idea seems futile and hopelessly expensive. Is there not a kind of fatalistic resignation to what seems inevitable lurking in most of us? Civil Defense authorities tell me that the number of homes with a survival kit stashed away in basement, cellar or other relatively secure place is shockingly low, even after several years of using open and hidden persuaders on TV, radio, and in newspapers.

Here then is the present crisis, compounded of many factors. We are required to be profoundly concerned about it, and to think and to respond from within the situation which we confront. "In the world," said our divine Master, "you have tribulation" — *angst* — deep, vague, gnawing anxiety. This does create tension, and we have been repeatedly warned that all tension is bad. Dr. Norman Vincent Peale has been quoted as saying that Americans are so tense that they cannot even go to sleep during a sermon any more. Is this bad? Of course we are tense, and it may be that we shall have to make our representatives in scientific and government circles more tense, until bold and daring measures are taken in partnership with other government leaders to prevent avoidable disaster, swift or slow. James Thurber, American humorist, wrote at the turn of the present year, "Yes, Virginia, there is a *bomb* in Gilead and don't take a tranquillizer to forget it." Thank God, we who are called to serve God's redemptive purpose, know

that there remains also a *balm* in Gilead. This balm is one of the indispensable elements in the survival kit of Christians.

Domestic Preparations

If you are like most Americans you shuttle between anxiety and resignation, between "Oh, dear," or even piously "Oh, dear Lord," and "So what?" or "Who needs a shelter?" It may be that in company with many others your domestic preparations for limited or all-out war have been deferred. A local director of Civil Defense tells me that every home should have the bare essentials of a survival kit. First, some kind of shelter where there would be reasonable protection against falling debris. In addition, and stored in the shelter there should be a first-aid kit, food and water, and a portable radio. This seems an entirely sensible precaution to take. Every intelligent citizen should prepare some such helps in the presence of enemies, within and without. We contend with powerful invisible foes, too.

One such enemy we have already named — fatalistic resignation to things as they are or as they drift into actuality. Another is what some critics think is our real faith despite our vehement denial, secularism. This is more than a theologian's cuss-word; it is the attitude that this world of things is all. What pastor has not dealt with other strong adversaries, within himself, and within those who are his people? Guilt, fear, hostility, despair — there is a "fallout" from these which saps vitality and causes malignancy in personalities and in the body politic.

"We fight," declared an undaunted leader of the early church, "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the unseen world that controls this dark world. We contend against agents from the very headquarters of evil." Yet he and his colleagues in the early church possessed a survival kit. Christians in every age have possessed resources which made them able to endure and to move forward according to the divine plan. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies," says our best-loved Psalm. On the table are resources adequate for any testing. What is there? What does the survival kit for Christians contain?

No Immunity

First, there is *shelter*. "God is my refuge and my strength, therefore will not we fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea." Our chief authority in this matter of our ultimate concern, our Lord Jesus, never promised immunity from wounds or trouble to win a follower. Never did he encourage what we call escapism. He practiced and summoned us to practice the presence of our heavenly Father. "I am alone," he said when enemies were moving ever closer to him, "and yet not alone, for the Father is with me." There is no absolute se curity in this world of relativity except in God. T the honest seeker of this God there is the incredibl good news that before he seeks he is sought by God

A pastor tells of asking a Christian actress t visit a deeply disturbed woman in her prison cell The prisoner was under sentence of death. Th actress was a devoted Christian but she declined "I have nothing to say to that poor woman" sh said in explaining her refusal to try to help. Wha would you say to such a person? That she ha done wrong and must repent? A higher court ha said this in her soul, and who would pass judgmen on a fellow sinner? Would you say to her, "Yo should have lived a better life. You ought to tr to do better in the time you have left"? I know that you would not indulge in such moralizing. W know what our blessed Lord would say and throug the power of the Holy Spirit does say to any on who turns to him in longing: "You are loved. Go loves you. You may put your confidence in tha Love now and forever."

Intimidation

Let no one either in the name of psychology o so-called realism intimidate you as you proclaim the Good News of Christ. "Other refuge have none" but the refuge divine love provides, a through commitment and trust and obedience am united with the great and gracious God "i Christ." Today more than ever before men an women and children need this transforming Word that God is, that he is love, that his steadfast lov endureth forever; that God is able to make u more than conqueror over cosmic loneliness, nucle ar bombs, racial enmity, personal defeat.

But what if you have already gone down unde a kind of radioactive blast? Next in the Christian' kit is what we may call *the first-aid equipment* Speaking of the Civil Defense survival kit, m friend the director said, "Just a few necessities: good antiseptic, bandages, splints. There is boun to be an injury to someone." Don't twentieth cen tury youngsters say of some experience, "I wa bombed!"? The colloquialism may simply mea that they were astonished by some unexpected re ognition or embarrassment, or really "shook up" b romantic love. But every person knows sooner o later what it is to be bombed to the depth of bein by some shattering failure or tragedy. Then th "balm in Gilead" becomes more than an antiqu phrase for healing. The claim of nineteen centurie is that there is healing for the deepest hurt. Whe we experience deep disease the divine physicia brings deep therapy. Thank God that we who ar ministers, both lay and clerical, can be used an are used by this Chief Physician and his helper Christ comes, often through frail, fallible and sin ning disciples — his pastors and ministers — an

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How Would Jesus Preach To a Modern Congregation?

Translating the Beatitudes

By Edwin K. Roberts

FOR centuries it has been the concern of Christians to translate the Bible into many different languages. The purpose has been to make it possible for the people to read and understand the Bible. Scholars have studied the sounds and dialects and alphabets of people in every part of the globe, and then put the Scriptures into these strange tongues. It is the proud boast of the American Bible Society that the Bible has now been translated into over eleven hundred different dialects and languages.

Translating the Bible is something that all of us who seek to live the Christian life must do. Whether we realize it or not, we translate the Bible not into a foreign language but into words and ideas that we feel fit into life today. The Bible says, "Thou shalt not kill"; but we have translated that to mean, Thou shalt not kill, except in times of war or in situations of self-defense or as a part of the police action of society. We recognize that in this kind of world there must be a concern for justice as well as mercy.

I am sure we all agree with the idea of the Sermon on the Mount. We all want to be happy. We all want to be truly alive. But if we were to state our ideas on this topic in the actual attitudes that we have, they would certainly sound very different from the words Jesus used. Furthermore, if Jesus were to preach the sermon to a modern congregation, if he were to preach on how to be happy and how to be truly alive, I suspect that he would speak in a way that would reach the mind of our generation; he would use different words. Let us take parts of this sermon, first state them as many of us actually think they would be stated in terms of modern life, and then let us try to find the words that Jesus might use if he were preaching today.

One of today's modern Beatitudes is, *"Happy are the pushers* (the people who know what they want), *for they get on in the world."** Certainly the world is full of pushers. In the grocery store the other day, with the strike coming on, the traffic was heavy, and two women with heavily laden carts were waiting in one line to check out. The woman in front stepped away for a few seconds to get another item. While she was away the other woman pushed the absent woman's cart aside and pushed her own ahead. When the first woman came back and recognized what had happened she didn't appreciate it and quite a fracas followed. But it did no good. The pusher got out first. Happy are the pushers, we say, for they are the ones that get on.

Jesus would state the same Beatitude in a quite different way but he would use modern words: *"Happy are those who realize their spiritual poverty: they have already entered the kingdom of Reality."* What does that mean? Consider for a moment the situation in the supermarket. It would mean that when the woman returned to her cart that had been shoved aside, she would remember that she could only be happy by realizing that she needed God's help to control her temper; that it was far more important for her own state of mind and her blood vessels and her arteries and her family when she got home; that she should have inner spiritual peace than that she should get out of that supermarket a few moments earlier; that it suggested how much faith she lacked if she allowed herself to be flustered by such a little incident.

The Hard-Boiled

Another of today's modern Beatitudes is, *"Happy are the hard-boiled: for they never let life hurt them."* According to this view, people become miserable by exposing themselves to the misfortunes of others. The only way to have a happy life is to refuse to think about other people's miseries.

Jesus again would state this Beatitude differently. He believed that those who shut their eyes on other people's trouble were bothered by it down

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* All the material in this sermon which appears in italics is from the book *Your God Is Too Small* by J. B. Phillips (New York: Macmillan, 1957) and is used by permission.

There Are Many Objectives in Life Which One Obtains Only Indirectly

The Gospel of Peace

By George W. Forell

Having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace. . . . Ephesians 6:15.

EVERYBODY knows what inflation is. It means that it takes more and more money to buy ever fewer goods and services. Inflation can go so far that money is finally worth only the paper it is printed on. After the German inflation in the early twenties some people actually used their paper money to paper the rooms in their homes. It wasn't good for anything else.

But inflation can also affect words. Words are supposed to convey specific meanings. When I say "chair" I hope my listeners are thinking of an object one can use to sit on. When I say "dog" I hope they think of a certain species of four-legged animal. Yet there are words which have been used to convey so many meanings that they have lost any specific meaning they might have once possessed. Some of the most beautiful words in the English language have become victims of this inflation. It is true of the words "love" and "freedom" and "peace." The number of meanings of these words has been so inflated that they do not mean very much to anybody.

"Peace" has become one of the most popular words in our language. Just as everybody is against sin, so everybody is for peace. The dictionary says that it can mean the "cessation of hostilities." It can mean "public order," "harmony in personal relations," "freedom from agitating passions." And in addition to these legitimate dictionary meanings, peace can also be a word used in the political conflicts of our time to describe the political interests of one of the contending parties. Whatever is in the interest of my particular party is in the interest of "peace."

Now the question arises, "What did the apostle Paul mean when he talked about peace?" When he mentioned the gospel of peace as part of the equipment of the Christian, he did not speak of peace in the political sense in contrast to war. He spoke of peace as a personal experience, as "freedom from agitating passions" and moral disruption.

We immediately ask, "How can we obtain this peace?" There are a good many people in our time who are convinced that such peace is the result of *having* things. They are sure that the reason they have no peace is that they do not have the right things. There are many young people who are certain that if they only had a car, any old car, they would have peace. They cannot talk or think about anything else but the car; in fact, they dream about it. And then they get a car. Do they have peace? Perhaps for a week. But then it has to be a better car. And so they work their way up from an old model-A Ford to a Cadillac, only to discover that peace isn't found in having a car.

Shopping Around

But perhaps peace is not the result of the possession of simple things like cars or even money. Perhaps having the right kind of home, the right kind of wife, is the basis of peace. But it may be significant that the people who experiment most in order to find the right kind of wife or husband are also the people who are apparently most spectacularly unable to find peace. Nobody can say that the luminaries in Hollywood do not try. But the harder they try, the more obviously they often fail. Shopping around in the way these people are wont to do appears to be the least successful road to peace.

If it is not *having* things that gives us peace, maybe it is *doing* things. There are people who assert that if one only can find the right job, then there is no question that peace is also assured. Therefore we have set up the most complicated vocational testing systems to make sure that people will find peace by being steered into the right oc-

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cupation. People are given not just one test, but a battery of tests. These tests are evaluated by an IBM machine which can do the work of a thousand skilled mathematicians. Cards are punched, lights flash, needles quiver — and yet, every poll indicates that a majority of our young people are not happy in the job they are doing. They may be in the right job according to these tests but certainly peace is not necessarily theirs.

Is it the fact that we work at all which destroys our peace? Perhaps if we could all have a twelve-month vacation every year, we would find peace. But we know only too well that boredom is the most frequent cause of quarrels and strife. It is when children have nothing that they must do that they quarrel most viciously. And adults are not very different. Unemployment, voluntary or involuntary, would appear to be the surest way to destroy all peace and cause constant turmoil and strife. It is not at work, but in the tavern after work, that people usually get into fights. It is when we have nothing to do that peace is most sorely threatened.

Mere Knowing

But if *having* things and *doing* things does not assure peace, perhaps *knowing* things does? Some say that it is our ignorance which is at the root of our strife and unrest. But is that really true? Is there any indication that knowledge gives us peace? Could one not almost say that ignorance is a more effective safeguard for peace than knowledge? If we did not know so much about the horrors of war in the atomic age, surely we could rest more easily. It often seems that the people who know the most are also the most disturbed. The late Albert Einstein said when asked about the weapons of the next war, "I cannot tell you what weapons will be used in the Third World War but I can tell you the weapons which will be used in the Fourth World War." "What will they be?" the reporters inquired. "Rocks and sticks," he answered. Knowledge often makes us restless and afraid. There seems to be no evidence whatsoever that peace is the result of a high school diploma or a college degree. It would be difficult indeed to prove that merely knowing things can lead to peace.

What, then, is this gospel of peace which the apostle mentions in our text? According to the New Testament peace is a gift. Our Lord said to his disciples: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world gives do I give to you." Everywhere in the New Testament peace as freedom from fear, from destructive passions and moral disruption, is understood to be a divine gift. We cannot attain it by our own power, but God can give it to us out of his power. Here the world's search for peace through the acquisition of things or the learning of psychological tricks is revealed as worthless and doomed. Paul found peace when he stopped trying to find it by his own resources and accepted God's gift: "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

One of the great abominations of our age is the almost blasphemous belief that Christian peace is something that we can figure out. Peace will be ours if we only buy the right book, go on the right diet, choose the right psychiatrist or use the proper breathing exercises. To all these efforts the gospel says "No!" Peace cannot be found on page 275 of a book distributed by the Book-of-the-Month Club. It is not anything that we can attain through our own efforts, but comes as God's gift to those who trust in him. It isn't an achievement, it is a gift. God gives us peace not because we have earned it but because he is good.

This peace is a message. The apostle speaks of the gospel of peace, the good news of peace. If peace is a divine gift which God is willing to give to everybody, this is indeed good news. If peace were the attainment of a few wealthy, wise or good men, then the outlook for most of us would be dismal and gray. But it is a gift; in order to receive it, all we have to do is to hear the message and believe it. The angels in the Christmas story proclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased." Peace is a fact of God's purpose for men. He wants to give us peace. Are we willing to believe the message and proclaim it to others? God wants to give peace to all of us. We may be poor, ignorant, evil, but he wants to give us peace. That is why he sent his Son into the world, why Christ was born, lived, died and rose again. This is the message of peace. It has to be proclaimed and believed — and it *will* give peace to those who believe it.

By-Product of Faith

A story about the emperor Napoleon reports that once while reviewing troops his horse went out of control. A private jumped out of the ranks and stopped the horse. The emperor said to him: "Thank you, Captain!" The private replied promptly: "Of what company and in which regiment, Sire?" Then Napoleon named the regiment and the company. Now the private was in fact a captain, not only because Napoleon had the power to make a private into a captain by his word, but also because the private had the courage to take the emperor at his word.

Similarly God proclaims his message of peace and it is ours if we take him at his word, if we believe his message with all our heart. Peace is a by-product of faith. In his letter to the Philippians the apostle Paul writes: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no

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The Book Nobody Knows

By David G. Buttrick

Do you understand what you are reading?
Acts 8:30.

THE apostle Philip was walking south on the road that ran from Jerusalem to Gaza. In a carriage by the side of the road, he saw a man reading from the Bible. Brazen Philip approached the man and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" "Well, no, not exactly," the man answered. So Philip began to explain the Scriptures and proclaim the good news of God.

It's a simple story, but one which speaks to us. Most of us have Bibles and most of us, at one time or another, read them. Sometimes we read in a fever of emotion, flipping pages in search of guidance, comfort or help. At other times, we read in leisure letting the words take root in our minds. But suppose some modern Philip, glancing over your shoulder, should stop to ask, "Do you understand what you are reading?" Would you not answer echoing that earlier reply: "Well, no, not exactly." Let's ask the questions: "What is the Bible? What can it mean to us?"

The Bible is a book about men, all kinds of men. Rich men, poor men, beggar men, thieves — they're all in the Bible. The small town lawyer, the priest, the prostitute, poets, farmers, harassed housewives — you'll find them there. Human life in all its spectral shades is fully portrayed in Scripture. Love, hate, joy, jealousy — is there any phase of life not found on its pages? Is there any human motive not disclosed by its words? "What a book!" wrote William Lyon Phelps; "You can learn more about human nature by reading the Bible than by living in New York City."[1] Or any city! Or anywhere! The Bible is a book about men.

On a deeper level, the Bible is a book about *Man*. Here is the human story, the same old story that began with Adam, repeated generation on generation. Man reaches for righteousness and ends in wretchedness. Man puffs in pride and is pricked by failure. Man rebels against God but still calls for him endlessly. Caitlin Thomas in her recent autobiography confesses: "Though I had washed my hands of God . . . and was absolutely fed up with His cheating games, and underhanded tricks . . . I kept saying: 'God, God God.' "[2] That is the theme of the Bible, page after page: man turns from God and then, lonely, calls, "God, God, God." See it in the Old Testament when after chasing "no-Gods," the children of Israel come stumbling back to him who *is* God. Hear it in the plaintive Psalms, in the tirades of Job, in the hope and despair of the Prophets. This is the story of the Bible and of every man alive.

Have you ever seen one of those trick books proffered by practical jokers? On the outside the book will have an ordinary title, *Wild Animals I Have Known,* but open it up and instead of pages there is a mirror inside. The Bible is like that. On the surface it seems a simple story of men and women long ago. But within, you see yourself, your rebellion, your pride, your own deep longing for God. The Bible is the story of every man.

"Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. What is the Bible? The Bible is the story of God. Oh, that doesn't mean that in the Bible God walks about, nor does it mean that in the Bible you will find theological debate and arguments to prove the reality of God. You won't. Nevertheless, the Bible is a book about God. He dominates every page and is implied in every word. God is the central character, the starring role. A few years ago Samuel Beckett wrote a play entitled *Waiting for Godot.* In it there are two men waiting on an empty stage, waiting for a certain Mr. Godot to arrive. As they wait their moods vary: they hope for Godot, are impatient with Godot, despise and love him. Godot, whoever he is, never appears. So with the Bible; while God himself is never seen, he is ever present calling forth faith, inspiring hope, causing irritation, loving and loved.

[1] William Lyon Phelps, *Human Nature in the Bible* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922.) Used by permission.

[2] Caitlin Thomas, *Leftover Life to Kill* (Boston: Atlantic — Little, Brown & Company, 1957). Used by permission.

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From beginning to end the Bible is a book about God.

He is a God who acts. Without God, the Bible is merely a series of disconnected stories, a confusion of names, places, dates and events. God gives the Bible its plot, for it is his story and the enacting of his purpose. Here is no God slouched on some celestial sofa playing endless games of solitaire for eternal amusement. Here is a God who acts, plans, directs, deals with men and women. Nothing that happens in the Bible happens apart from his will and willingness. When Abraham marched out of Ur and down the coast to Canaan, he journeyed not simply in search of pastureland: God sent him. And David was crowned King of Israel, not only because he had a lust for power which assuredly he had, but because God chose him and chose to use him. Oh, how hard it is for us to think as the Bible does about God. We are so full of our own plans and power that we leave no place for God in our lives. Yet, God is a God who acts.

Revealed Meaning

God is a God who reveals: He wants to be known. We talk of "finding God." But, God is not a thing to be discovered like a distant planet. The Bible is not a detective story in which man with a soul full of clues tracks down an elusive creator. No, God comes to us. God shows himself to us. God says, "Look, listen, here am I." From Genesis to Revelation the Bible is the story of a God who wants to be known. But we will not listen, we dare not look, we dodge his presence when he draws near — and this is also the story of the Bible.

What is the Bible? The Bible is the story of *Jesus Christ.* Suddenly in the New Testament the unseen God is seen, the God who wants to be known arrives in flesh. Born of a woman on a day in a year on the earth came Christ — and in him all our secret longings find sweet fulfillment. The lonely crying of "God, God, God" gives way to a shout of triumph! "Christ!" The men who have waited for Godot greet his appearing. Here revealed to us is the God of Love.

Christ gives meaning to the Old Testament. Have you read it lately? It's a hodge-podge procession of laws, genealogies and love songs, of ancient history, priests and prophets, of faith and despair. How can anyone make sense of such a jumble? But see, it leads us to Christ! Turn back through the pages of the Old Testament and you will find that all the way there were hints and goads, all the way back to Genesis signs and symbols that anticipate him. It is as if all those years God was preparing for Christ, leading mankind to the place of the cross, even as all the events in your life are intended to lead you to him — your love songs and your prophetic spirit, your faith and despair.

When we were children we had a picture puzzle that was two-sided. On one side it was a mass of color impossible to piece together. But on the other side was a picture of Lincoln and that was easy. The Old Testament makes sense when its separate pieces are put together in Christ. He is the climax of the Bible and the eternal wonder of every human life.

Christ inspires the New Testament. The Gospels, the letters of Paul, Peter, John and the rest: they are written on the other side of a victory. They do not expect Christ, for he has come and they are filled with joy. The men and women you meet in the New Testament are changed men and women. No longer do they live in the old way of sin and striving, but in a newly won spirit of faith and affection. If the Old Testament is a record of the children of Adam, the New Testament is the story of the children of Christ gathered into the family of the church. And it never ends. We shut our Bibles at the book of Revelation, but still it goes on and on, written in the lives of Christ's folk forever. Year after year it is enlarged by our lives. The story of God's love for man never ends, and it never will, until the Kingdom comes and his will is done. So, let us continue the story, God's story, living in his Spirit, loving in his Name, writing God's word with your life.

Survival Kit

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he brings the singularly efficacious medicine of forgiveness, of new hope, of indestructible peace at the center of existence.

Have an adequate supply of *nonperishable food,* said the Civil Defense official. When his first men asked him to eat at Jacob's well, Jesus said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know. My food is to the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work." Man cannot live without bread, and he cannot live by bread alone. We have hungers which no synthetic vitamins can satisfy. We thirst for living water which no earthly source can supply. Modern men and women have yearnings and aspirations which even interplanetary travel cannot fulfill. What is the "food for the fed-up"? Jesus said, "I am the bread of life, he who comes to me shall not hunger; and he who believes in me shall never thirst. I am the divine bread which came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever." Surely this poetic way of describing Christ's mission means that Christ gives the essentials without which real life can neither begin nor continue. Christ received in the heart by faith provides the spiritual vitamins and the deep, durable satisfactions which make miracles of ordinary persons. To the outsider, to the man who has never made the experiment, this claim

sounds like the out-of-this-world promise of the misty-eyed mystic. To us who have tasted this living bread, it is more real than those things which can be seen, handled, tested in laboratories. Is it surprising that in the Lord's Supper elemental food becomes symbol of love and life? An unending task confronting Christians in our time is to show by the difference Christ makes in our lives and relationships that individuals of every race, temperament, culture can have their deepest hungers satisfied in friendship with Christ and in service of Christ.

A self-contained portable radio-set is necessary to maintain contact with headquarters, said the Civil Defense director. Every citizen needs to maintain two-way communication with the central authority; if sending is impossible, receiving is possible and imperative. In every human being there is a kind of built-in radio-receiver, the capacity for communication with life's central authority. The familiar name is prayer. Prayer is not using God as a kind of extra battery, nor as a reserve supply of energy to use in emergencies. Prayer, as a great Nobel prize-winning scientist declared, is a force as real as terrestrial gravity. When our prayers are screened through the mind of Christ, and are leagued with other Christians in a global network of intercession, power to influence for good the minds of others is released. Human direction may be altered, and human motivation changed helpfully by intelligent, persistent united prayer.

God calls us to serve his purpose of building Christlike personalities within a more Christian national and world community. He provides resources to achieve the impossible. Neither nuclear explosions nor the will to power and domination within human hearts can deflect or defeat that purpose. Leaders of the churches in every community of our nation are more than spiritual defense directors, but they are essential to helping others work with God for health, peace, and the kind of living to which eternity is promised. Whether small or large, every church witnesses to God, our refuge and strength, to the divine forgiveness which can heal man's deepest hurt, to Christ, the soul's sustenance, to prayer as the two-way "intercom system" by which guidance, inspiration, strength come to the humblest Christian. Given men and women so committed and so called, God's human family will walk through every valley of shadow fearing no evil and submitting to no enemy.

Preferred Stock

The pulpit at "First" features Bultmann.
The preacher at "Christ" goes for Barth.
At "St. John's" the true source is Brunner.
(This reads like a Theol. Stock Mart.)

LESLIE CONRAD, JR.

Gospel of Peace

(Continued from page 15)

anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Here the apostle shows how peace is a by-product of faith and the Christian life. There are many objectives in life which one attains only indirectly. A very simple example is success in sports. Victory in basketball is the by-product of accurate shooting, excellent physical condition, imaginative co-operation and many other factors. The team that wants to win basketball games does not practice receiving the trophy, carrying the coach off the floor or posing for photographers. Such practice would be the surest way to lose. Victory in sports is won by indirection; it is the by-product of many other accomplishments.

The Power of Trust

Other far more important achievements are of this nature. Happiness, for example, can never be gained directly. A person who says, "I shall dedicate my life to being happy," is almost sure to end up very unhappy indeed. Happiness is a by-product of life and is often realized by people whose goal was to raise a large family on very little money, to do a difficult job faithfully and well, to serve God and the neighbor with imagination and devotion. Doing these things to the best of their ability, they also turned out to be happy.

In the same manner peace is a by-product of the Christian faith and life. The apostle Paul when a prisoner in Rome wrote to the Philippians the words we have just quoted: "Rejoice in the Lord always!" He had no earthly goods, and he had lost his freedom. His future looked dark. But he did have peace — not because he had read the right books or learned the proper psychological tricks, but because he had absolute trust in God. This faith gave him the peace which enabled him to comfort the people in Philippi by letter and the people who came to visit him in prison in Rome in person. Peace turned out to be the by-product of his Christian faith and life.

Of course, we all want peace. This is the reason that the books which promise it are best-sellers. But peace is not found in such books. It is found in faith and obedience to the Savior. Indeed we want peace, and it will be given to us when we stop fighting for it. When we calmly follow our Lord Jesus Christ as humble disciples, the peace of God which passes all understanding will fill *our* hearts and minds also.

Nothing Less than Intense Devotion Will Bring the Kingdom on Earth

Let's Get Out Of the Bleachers!

By Lawrence K. Whitfield

THE other day I was called by a mortician and asked to conduct the funeral service of an aged mother who had gone on to her eternal reward. Because I knew nothing about the family or the deceased loved one, I arranged for an interview with those who remained so they could fill me in with some particulars. Among the questions I asked was, "Did Mother have any special interests or hobbies which added color and meaning to her life?" At first the answer was, "No, none!" But directly a son-in-law broke into the conversation and said, "Except baseball." Then he went on to explain how this dear old lady, even in her sunset years, had maintained a fondness for the game she had learned to love as the wife of a young sand-lot player back in the Midwest. In these later years seated before her television set she would still heckle the umpire, razz the pitchers and scream in the home runs as some lucky batter got a chance to make the circuit. For this senior citizen nothing brought as much sheer joy as a baseball game, even though she could no longer go to the park and add her enthusiasm to that of the many others.

There are not many places in the world where this sort of leisure time occupation would not have seemed unusual for a woman of advanced years. But in the United States where baseball holds the spotlight for so much of the year, such a choice is not only readily understood but is universally endorsed. There was a time a good while ago, however, when this was not the case, for baseball had not taken on the proportions of a major attraction. According to a committee, formulated to uncover the history of the game, along about 120 years ago next month the first game was played in Cooperstown, New York, under the eagle eye of Abner Doubleday and between two teams of cadets from a nearby academy. There were few spectators around on that memorable day in June of 1839 and no one had any premonition that the antics of that handful of players would even be appealing a century later, let alone have developed into a multimillion dollar enterprise.

But that is exactly what did happen and as refinements of various kinds have been added to the game its appeal has gone up and up until we expect everyone from the smallest child to the eldest grandparent to be interested in baseball.

Perhaps the biggest single change which has come about in this more than a century of baseball in America has been the appearance of a horde of spectators. In early baseball, and in the still earlier British games of "Rounders" and "Cats" which English lads played in the 18th century, little value was attached to those who came just to look on. The purpose of the game was to afford exercise and pleasure for those who played and no one gave much thought to those who came to watch. It was the participation that was the real worth of the game.

Spectator Sports

But no longer is this true. Now in baseball the greater attention is directed to the nonplayer who pays to sit in a seat and approves or disapproves of what goes on in front of him from the moment the umpire calls, "Play Ball" until the winning run crosses the plate. It is the wish of this onlooker and not the whim of the player that sets the mood of today's leaders in baseball. Millions of dollars have been spent to provide the spectator with comfort and convenience because it is he who is by far the most important person at the game. What he wants matters and no one who wants to stay close to America's number one pastime ignores for long the nonplayer who came only to watch what the professionals do down on the diamond.

From many angles this switch in the importance of people at the baseball game can be seen to have had beneficial results. Certainly it provides enjoyment for a larger group. It makes possible gainful employment for thousands who might not otherwise have work, and it gives the professionals a

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more satisfactory source of income for a considerable portion of their lives. Almost everybody seems happy with the arrangement except those of us who have responsibility for programs of life improvement which depend for their effectiveness upon people being actual participants in the proceedings, not onlookers who are satisfied to relaxedly gaze out upon what others are trying to do.

Fascinating as the major sports of our day are, I believe every one of them has contributed to the downfall of the Christian church by increasing the number of people who are satisfied to sit on the sidelines and let someone else carry on the game. Unless the rank and file of modern church members will get out of the bleachers and into the game of putting Christ's Kingdom in a commanding place in the affairs of our world, all of the abundant life that he came to earth to provide will be unpossessed by us who so proudly call ourselves his followers.

Secret of Effectiveness

"Well," says some confused auditor, "I'm not sure I know exactly what you are talking about. I can't follow your analogy. Explain yourself." If the record of the New Testament is authentic, and I will agree that it is, then in days past the secret of the effectiveness of the Christian faith lay in the fact that it got down inside of individual people and transformed them at the point of their contacts with the world about them. Each person recognized that God had a word for him. Each person came to see that God had a task for him. Each person found that Jesus died for his sins and expected him to consecrate himself to the heavenly Father's will for the remaking of the world of affairs all about him. There was no room in early Christianity for anyone to complacently sit in the bleachers while others worked out his soul's salvation for him in the game of life. Each Christian stood on his own two feet and his relationship to his God and to his fellows meant much or little depending upon the part he took out on the playing field.

No longer is this so. Today perhaps the greatest tragedy that has befallen Christianity is that so many wonderful people are satisfied to come to church now and again and watch the few at work trying to revamp the world to God's purpose and plan. No longer are the Christian churches teeming with the activity of Christ-centered members. No more is the world conscious of a difference which has come into the individual Christian's life because he has accepted his place on the Master's team.

"But how do we get out of the bleachers and into the game of world redemption?" somebody asks. "Are there definite steps we can take to bring us closer to this ideal of our Lord?" And of course the answer is a resounding "Yes!" The way is simple, the plan easy to understand. And it is based entirely upon the proposition that each of us is needed out on the field, not in the bleachers.

First of all, each of us must become a *learning* Christian. The wealth of Jesus' insights have never been mastered by anyone, and like the search for gold in a mine where the deposit of ore is rich, each new eagerness to discern more of his truth brings untold values to our living. We must study our own Bibles, not leave them to the church school teacher and the minister. We must keep abreast of Christian attitudes as they are to be found in every area of experience, not bypass Christian books and magazines as if they were subversive literature. We must begin to talk up in our groups so that the understanding of all can be enhanced by the discernment God has given us. We must give up our sitting in the bleachers and depending upon the professionals to play the game — by becoming learning Christians.

Then we must become *praying* Christians. For far too long we have labored under the delusion that the preacher, the lay leader, the church school superintendent and the grandma who has taught church school for fifty years are the pray-ers and we are only the folk who make requests of them. Not so in the plan of Jesus, for everyone who would come after him must set himself straight with God by becoming his own channel of the Creator's dynamic power to affect the world for good.

We must get over our notion that anyone else's prayers reach higher than do our own. Christ's team is made up of amateurs whose stumbling, poorly worded, improperly phrased prayers provide the winning runs in the game of life. We must be rid of the concept that nothing will happen if we pray, that it is only the specialist who can move mountains with his fellowship with God. Christ's companions in the long ago were for the most part men and women who made no dent upon their own culture, but because they were related to him they became the pioneers who upset the world. So it will be again in our day if we will get out of the bleachers and go to praying on our own.

Temporary Trustees

Lastly, we must become *giving* Christians. The greatest hindrance to the spread of Christianity today is the refusal of her supposed devotees to recognize that all they have is God's and they are only temporary trustees of his possessions, having been given the privilege of choosing those worthwhile projects to which they will give their generous support. We must cease our thinking that others are better off than we are and so can absorb our share of the church's expense. We must get over the erroneous conclusion that the church can render a good account of its opportunities if we give our meager dollar a week to keep open its doors. We must be done with the thought that we can sit in the bleachers and watch a few of our fellow mem-

(Continued on page 22)

Time to Wake Up

By Oswald C. J. Hoffmann

WHEN reveille sounds, it is time to get up, whether the bugle calls at a recreation camp for young people or at a military installation for men in the armed forces. In his letter to the church at Rome, St. Paul is sounding reveille for the world. "Now it is high time," he says, "to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

Today's newspaper headlines are a startling commentary on mankind's deep sleep. They tell the story of a young man with a wife and two children who brutally and senselessly shot to death three people, each in a different shop, picking up a few paltry dollars with each transaction. Brought face to face with his crimes, he was asked: "Did you rob and kill in order to provide a better life for your family?" His reply: "Oh no, that money is mine." The growing lack of moral responsibility in our own country is a matter of statistical record. The United States Federal Bureau of Investigation reports that during a recent year a major crime was committed every 12.2 seconds, or one for every 129 persons in the population of the United States. New Yorkers were dismayed to learn several months ago that juvenile crime had increased over 41 per cent during the previous six months. The average citizen accepts news of violence and injustice, of private and public immorality, with little more than tongue-clucking and then dismisses it from his mind, feeling that it is of no concern to him.

St. Paul tells us that we Christians cannot afford to accept the situation in the world with complacency. What is more, we cannot become part of that moral disintegration which characterizes so much of life in the world round about us. It is high time, he says, for all of us to rouse ourselves: "Wake up out of that sleep; the night is far spent; the day is at hand. Cast off the works of darkness; walk honestly as in the day. As you get ready for the day, put on the Lord Jesus Christ."

As Advent draws near, the alarm rings loudly. Don't bury your head in a pillow and assume that because you cannot hear the alarm, it has stopped ringing. Don't reach out impatiently to shut off the alarm, lulling yourself to sleep again with the thought that it does not ring for you. God's alarm is ringing for you, whoever you are.

Advent reminds us that life in this world is something like the break of day in some deep mountain valley. At dawn, though the darkness lingers below, high overhead the first shafts of morning have illuminated the faces of the mountains. The day has come and it is time to be up and about, to put on garments suitable for the new day. That day is with us right now because our Lord Jesus Christ has come.

Stop and Consider

St. Paul is talking to all conditions and classes of people when he urges us to wake up. He is speaking to those who have put on the Lord Jesus Christ, who believe in him as their Lord and Savior, and who strive to live in harmony with that profession of faith. He is speaking as well to those who may profess faith in God and in his Son, but whose lives are out of harmony with that profession of faith. And he is speaking to those who refuse to pretend, frankly admitting that they do not believe in Jesus Christ and never claiming to have put on Jesus Christ at the beginning of a new day.

To those of you who do not confess Christ, indeed "The night is far spent." It may be later than you think. Tomorrow may be the day when you draw your last breath. Christ is reaching out to you. If you push him aside, you are following the road to disaster. If you ignore him or are indifferent to his call, whether you realize it or not, your situation is dangerous. Stop right where you are. Consider who you are. And then consider who he is. Jesus Christ came to pull you away from that aimless, meaningless life which is so characteristic of the world. He came to give you light in that darkness of yours. You may not know

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everything about Christ at this moment, but you *can* know this: He is your Savior. If you sincerely seek his help, he will give you a new life. He will take you out of the world of darkness and of night in which you may be living at the moment, a world of rioting and drunkenness, or debauchery and lasciviousness, of quarreling and jealousy. He will give you power to walk honestly as in the day. Do not turn him aside.

To you who profess Jesus Christ as your Lord but have disregarded the claims that this profession makes upon your life, I cannot but say, "Wake up. Get ready for the new day by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. By offering himself in life and in death, our Lord won forgiveness for you. He took his task seriously; take yours seriously too. Square your actions with the profession of your faith in Jesus Christ." You cannot claim to be a follower of Jesus Christ and then continue in the works of darkness. You cannot claim his glorious redemption as your own and then go on with rioting and drunkenness, with chambering, strife and envying. For you have been bought with a costly price — a price paid by the Son of God with his own life.

Christ calls everyone to a new kind of life. It is life out in the daylight, a life that enjoys the sunlight of God's love and favor for everyone to see. How can we give answer to God who loves us in spite of ourselves, except by trusting him and having confidence in him? How can we have real confidence in him if we continually retreat into the darkness away from the forgiveness, away from the love and the power he gives us to enjoy?

An Open Book

"Walk honestly as in the day." That is the way our Lord Jesus Christ lived his life. Surrounded by the power and glory of God himself, his life was an open book for all men to read. Let your life be the kind of book that all men can read. Christ put his life completely in God's hands, and God gave him an armor no dart of trouble could pierce. In the darkness of a world governed by secular motivations, God will give you armor too, the armor of light, if you will but put your trust in the great name of Jesus Christ. Christ forgot himself completely to give himself for the sins of the world. In Christ you can forget yourself too, to give yourself up to that same kind of unselfish love for God and neighbor, of which our world stands in such incredible need.

In Jesus Christ God offers you the exciting challenge of a new day right now. This present moment has been given you to receive Christ, to acknowledge his Saviorhood, to walk the way of personal Christian commitment. This moment has not been bonded by an absolute guarantee that there will be another moment, a later time, when God will give you another opportunity to do what he wants you to do right now. Hear the call of God's reveille. Wake up and live. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ — right now. Do not wait, groping around aimlessly in the darkness seeking for adventure in the kind of life which eventually brings nothing but unhappiness. Set out on the exciting adventure of finding Christ and following him, of believing in Christ and serving him, of walking with Christ and loving him.

Out of the Bleachers

(Continued from page 20)

bers keep the game going by their exceptional sacrifice of the money entrusted into their care.

"Oh, yes, but," you say, "if I come down out of the bleachers and begin to do all these things you are suggesting I will have to change my way of life. I can no longer do what is being meaningful now and do these things too." And the reply is, "You are exactly right." No one can take his place out on the field in the game of life and stay comfortably in the bleachers too. We must choose, you and I, where we will be and then must pay the price of our devotion, or reap the consequences of our lack of it.

Some years ago a young recruit was assigned to a Coast Guard Station along the rugged Atlantic Coast. He was glad for his assignment for he knew that off the shore from his station there were rough waters and that would surely mean action for him. One winter night a fierce storm raged; the wind howled, the snow beat upon the glass of the observation tower, and men sitting in quiet isolation in the barracks prayed for their comrades on the high seas. Then the radio began to sputter. It was their call and the message read that just a mile off coast a ship was floundering in distress. The word was quickly passed. Each man donned his gear and rushed to his assigned station. Again and again and again they tried to launch the rescue boats and again and again they were thrown back by the waves. Finally the young lad who was answering his first call to go out and save his fellow men came to the commanding officer and in great anguish said, "Don't you think we had better abandon our attempt, sir? We can never get back from that raging sea!" The old salt drew himself up to his full height and looking down at the raw recruit, who was so worried about saving his own skin, he said: "Sailor, we don't have to come back. But we do have to get out there."

Just so it is in the game of life on the team of the Master. We don't have to be comfortable, well-off and complacent up in the bleachers. We *do* have to be out in the field in the thick of the game, if we are going to continue to say we love the Lord and want his Kingdom here among men.

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Among Us—

When a Sermon Backfires

By James B. Ashbrook

I AM never going back to that church again! Nor am I going to allow my children to go!" Such was the outraged comment of a woman leaving a worship service one Sunday morning during Lent.

What had happened? What had the minister said to trigger off such resentment? Was her response simply that of a disgruntled person and therefore something that could be dismissed as unimportant?

In that instance the comment was only unique in its vehemence. It was not unique in terms of a rather widespread disturbance about the sermon of the morning. Uneasy conversations began occurring all over the community. The sentiment soon reached the proportion of genuine concern on the part of some of the church leaders. The decision was made that at the next meeting of the Boards of Deacons and Deaconesses it would be discussed.

The chairman of the deacons sat down with the pastor to share with him the concern. When the minister learned of it, he urged that the matter be brought out into the open and discussed, for the ministry of the Word, as well as the total ministry of the church, was the responsibility of the entire congregation as "the people of God" and not simply the minister as an isolated individual. In fact, he welcomed the opportunity for the two boards to participate directly in the responsibility for the preaching ministry.

What had the minister said to produce such a strong reaction? Usually sermon after sermon goes by with hardly anyone getting excited one way or another. Had he urged the recognition of Red China by the United States? Had he attacked the drinking mores of the congregation? Had he urged serious racial integration there? These touchy social issues could be expected to backfire. Actually, nothing of such general community interest was involved. Rather it was something much more personal and intimate — the whole matter of "sex, marriage, and sanctity." For his Lenten series the minister had concentrated on Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth. That particular message had been an attempt to examine and relate what Paul had said about this area of human experience.

Preparation

The meeting arrived. Everyone had been informed ahead of time of the concern which was to be discussed. Copies of the sermon had been mimeographed and distributed via the literature tables the Sunday prior to the meeting. Parenthetically, the copies of this particular sermon were picked up more rapidly than any previous one except one on "love and marriage." Several of the members had made it a point to canvass opinion generally in order to have as representative a range of attitudes as possible. The chairman opened the meeting by stating briefly the background of the discussion — how several people had been upset about the sermon and it was felt that the best way to deal with the situation was to explore it together as the body directly responsible for the spiritual life of the church.

The discussion opened with a reporting of what had been discovered in canvassing opinion. There was a small group quite strongly resentful of the fact that the subject of sex had been dealt with from the pulpit. The woman referred to at the beginning of the article was definitely lost, for the present at least, to the life of the church. There were others who had attended another church that particular Sunday knowing ahead of time what the sermon subject was going to be. A father of a fourteen-year-old girl had been very uncomfortable and embarrassed in having to sit through the service with her beside him. Several felt the sermon would have been all right except for the bluntness of speech — "sex" (36 times), "sexual" (ten times), "intercourse" (once), "physical intercourse" (once), "sensual or sensuality" (eight times). If more discretion had been used at the point of vocabulary, it would not have been so upsetting. Some believed it was important for the minister to deal with sexual matters, especially for young married couples and teen-agers, but it should not be done in a morning worship service. One person of a liturgical bent felt highly offended to have had sex discussed on "Passion" Sunday.

The largest percentage of those who were critical came from among the older members. However, there were a few of the younger members and even some of the college students who were also offended. Some people had not thought about it any more than to be a little surprised that the subject had been discussed from the pulpit in such an open manner. And the majority, although not an overwhelming majority by any means, had been very appreciative. These, by and large, were younger and middle-aged couples, as well as students and teen-agers.

Freedom of Pulpit

With this report as background the group began to discuss the issue. Concern was expressed that the freedom of the pulpit not be impinged upon — nor was the discussion ever intended as such with the exception of perhaps one or two people. One person felt they had no business whatsoever even discussing the matter. The minister was the preacher and he should not have to be "called on the carpet," so to speak, for what he had done. Others indicated that in calling a minister they were placing their confidence in him as a responsible person and, therefore, such a discussion had no place.

Such concern for the freedom *and* responsibility of the pulpit was gratifying in terms of a general background for the minister's work. However, the issue was not so much a calling to an accounting as an exploring together of the preaching responsibility in that situation particularly and from that to preaching in general. The minister does not stand in the pulpit as a private prophet parading his own pet ideas and prejudices. He stands there as representative of God to the con-

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gregation and as representative of the congregation to God. It is for that reason such a discussion very properly took place and ideally ought to be taking place continually. This outburst of concern provided the opportunity for the deacons and deaconesses to do the very thing for which they are partly responsible.

Once the dimension of legitimate, responsible and welcomed discussion was in the open the exploration continued. A mother of a fourteen-year-old boy reported how proud she had been to be in church with her son that Sunday. At home afterwards the sermon provided her with an opportunity to open up with the boy on this sensitive subject. One father said, "As you know, in our family we have four boys. And when you have four boys you can't avoid the subject of sex. Only the week before the sermon we had had to have a talk with them on some of the physical aspects of it. I was glad to have it put in its spiritual dimension the next week. It somehow put the whole thing in the right perspective."

Testimony

The professor of anatomy at the university declared that he dealt with sex in his classes all the time. In fact, he couldn't teach his courses without dealing with it, charts and all. It was his conviction that the area should be discussed every year. A college student on the board expressed "surprise" that there had been a reaction. Students were so free, sometimes too free, in their discussion of sex. He and his fiancée had found it helpful to have worshiped together that Sunday, as did a number of students with whom he had talked. It was reported that several couples had been able to talk about their attitudes towards sex in their marriage because of the sermon in a way they had not been able to previously.

A mother of four daughters, the oldest being in the eighth grade, had been in church and naturally wondered how they had taken the sermon. At the dinner table she asked if they had understood what the sermon had been about. Oh, yes, they had. Then, wondering what specific impressions they had taken away, she asked what it was the minister was getting at. To which the reply came, "He was telling us to keep our bodies clean and holy because they are the temples of God."

An unmarried person pointed out that the position of the single person had also been dealt with in a sensitive and helpful manner. A woman responsible for teaching hygiene in the high school requested forty copies to use as an introduction to the area of sex education with her students. Some felt uneasy yet grateful for the fact that the subject could be brought within the confines of the worship service. It helped to make worship even more related to life and life, especially sex, more related to worship.

After about forty minutes of general discussion, in which the consensus of opinion had moved decidedly to approval of what had taken place, the chairman asked the minister if there was anything he would like to say. Up until that time he had refrained from any comment whatsoever.

He expressed deep appreciation for the fact there could be such free and frank discussion within the group. If people could not feel free to speak the truth in love within the church, as St. Paul put it, where could they? The discussion represented a step in the direction of helping the preaching ministry become a congregational responsibility and not simply a ministerial responsibility. He went on to express some concern that the minority not be pushed aside in the face of general approval. Their feelings were important and needed to be both accepted and appreciated, as the fact that there was a discussion at all indicated they had been.

Then he went on to explain his approach to the preaching ministry. He told how he planned his sermon themes six months at a time in order to give meaningful direction and adequate dimension to what he proclaimed. His Lenten series were usually taken as an opportunity to do a somewhat heavier job of education in the meaning of the Christian faith.

Pulpit Calendar

Dec. 6 — 2nd Sunday in Advent.
Dec. 13 — 3rd Sunday in Advent. Universal Bible Sunday.
Dec. 20 — 4th Sunday in Advent.
Dec. 24 — Christmas Eve.
Dec. 25 — Christmas.
Dec. 27 — Sunday after Christmas.
Dec. 31 — New Year's Eve.
Jan. 1 — New Year's Day.
Jan. 3 — Second Sunday in Christmastide.
Jan. 3-10 — Universal Week of Prayer.
Jan. 5 — Twelfth Night: Epiphany Eve.
Jan. 6 — Epiphany.
Jan. 10 — 1st Sunday after Epiphany.
Jan. 17 — Missionary Day.
Jan. 17-23 — Church and Economic Life Week.
Jan. 24 — 3rd Sunday after Epiphany.
Jan. 24-31 — Youth Week.
Jan. 31 — 4th Sunday after Epiphany.
Feb. 2 — Presentation of Jesus in the Temple.
Feb. 7 — The Transfiguration.
Feb. 14 — Race Relations Sunday.
Feb. 21 — Universal Day of Prayer for Students.
Feb. 21-28 — Brotherhood Week.

The general area was decided upon the preceding summer and the actual breakdown worked out during the Christmas holidays. That particular year he had decided to concentrate on one specific book in the Bible — First Corinthians — whereas the year before he had covered the biblical message by a consideration of seven books ranging from Genesis to Revelation.

In the course of trying to understand Paul's message, the whole area of sex, marriage, and sanctity emerged as one of the seven themes that needed to be dealt with if the book was to be presented in its full scope. Even seven sermons could not begin to do justice to it, but it was at least an attempt. To deal with the matter of sex in this way made it something quite natural and appropriate, despite the response. Just as it would be natural in preaching a series on the Ten Commandments to open up the subject with the seventh commandment. To preach on sex just in the normal routine would make people raise the question, "Well, what's the matter with him? Why is he preaching on that anyway?" To discuss the subject apart from some kind of framework like a Lenten series on First Corinthians opens the way to questioning its appropriateness.

As a further expression of his attempt to make the preaching ministry congregational, he reported the fact that two groups — one composed of nine college students and the other of seven couples — had spent from September through Lent discussing First Corinthians in their meetings. They had tackled the material at the request of the minister with the understanding their discussions were feeding into the background material to be drawn together for the series. In that way the end results — the sermons — represented not only the minister himself wrestling with the Word. They also represented members of the congregation participating in the responsibility.

Fellowship

As the meeting drew to a close, there came over the group a deep sense of togetherness in the Christian fellowship. The chairman, voicing the feelings of the group, said, "I personally feel, and I know the rest of you feel this has been a religious experience. And I, for one, have gotten a new insight into what goes on behind the scenes in preaching." Others spoke up along similar lines. Then concern arose over the fact others had not been able to share in that experience. And how might this, which the twenty-two people present had been through, be communicated. Each person took upon himself the responsibility to tell others of what had taken place and so, because of the representative nature of the group, the word would be passed around to a large percentage of the congregation.

As a result of this experience, I have

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THE PULPIT

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come to the following conclusions: (1) The whole area of sex is both frightening and fascinating (in the sense of serious concern) for the large majority of people. The student fellowship group put aside the announced topic the day the sermon was preached to continue discussing it. The minister was invited to speak to the personal philosophy discussion group of the Christian Association at the University on the subject "A Modern Realistic Christian's View of Sex." He was told not to expect more than eight or nine students. The meeting would run from eight to nine in the evening. Forty-five students showed up. At ten minutes of ten the formal meeting had to disband because the girls had to get back to their dorms before closing. Several of the men continued the discussion until, finally, at ten-thirty the minister said he had to get home. In several conversations and counseling sessions, difficulties in the area of sex were brought up. Whether or not sex is discussed from the pulpit there was widespread concern that the church deal with sexual attitudes and behavior from the Christian perspective.

(2) Criticism can become the springboard to creative communication and communion. When there is an atmosphere of genuine acceptance and concern, people are able to be honest with each other, not out of resentment but rather for the sake of understanding. Instead of being driven apart, they find themselves being drawn ever more closely together. Only indifference keeps people apart.

(3) There is a genuine concern that the minister be somewhat free from congregational and community pressures in order to preach the Word to the best of his understanding. Any curtailment is seen as a potential hindrance to the needed word of judgment, and as such, it must be avoided.

(4) The preaching ministry is not the responsibility of the minister alone. It is a congregational responsibility. Therefore, it gains its strength as individuals and groups are increasingly helped to contribute both to its preparation and to its evaluation.

Fine Lines From a Prayer

NOW we pray that Thou wilt truly come into our minds and hearts and spirits in this particular Christmastide. May it be a season not merely of observance, but of rich and deep Christian experience, when we know the Savior as one whom we really love, and one in whose love we are held and known. May we claim him for our own who has already claimed us for himself, whose coming was good tidings of great joy for all people everywhere. Amen. — *Lowell M. Atkinson, First Methodist Church, Englewood, New Jersey.*

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"The last issue of The Green Street Messenger was very well done." — Rev. Victor P. Musk, Augusta, Maine

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"The John Wesleyan Magazine was well received. This parish paper is proving an inspiration to our church. We are proud that we have it." — Rev. R. B. McRae, Fayetteville, N. C.

"The St. John's Visitor is received with enthusiasm by our members. The last issue was excellent. We find there is an increase in the attendance at our church since The St. John's Visitor has been distributed." — H. R. Burge, Knoxville, Tenn.

"The success of our parish paper, Our Church Herald, has been beyond our expectations. Your work is the best we have seen. As a result of publishing a parish paper, the attendance at our church services is steadily increasing." — L. A. Lawson, Wilmington, Delaware

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Book Reviews

How to Read the Bible. *By Julian Price Love. Macmillan. $3.95.*

Story of the Bible World. *By Nelson Beecher Keyes. C. S. Hammond. $5.95.*

Youth's Companion to the Bible. *By Ralph D. Heim. Muhlenberg. $3.75.*

THESE three books have essentially the same aim: "to suggest some ways of reading the Bible that will help to make it glow with meaning" (Love); to provide "a new and refreshing approach to the revered Book *(sic)* of the Bible" (Keyes); to enable readers to "understand and appreciate the Bible better as history and literature and above all [to] appropriate its moral and religious message more fully as their way of living" (Heim). But the plan and the approach in the three differ widely.

How to Read the Bible is a revised edition of a book published in 1940, which has proved its value. The opening chapters give some excellent advice, applicable to the reading of any great literature, and this is followed by a discussion of various ways of approaching the biblical material. (Ways *not* to read the Bible are firmly dealt with.) The Christian aim in reading the Bible is "knowledge of God" and "fellowship with Christ"; and the book is addressed to those who read with this aim. The emphasis is therefore on the definite religious values presented in the different parts of the Bible; questions of authorship and date are of relatively little importance. For example, the difference in "tone and purpose" between Isaiah 1-39 and 40-66 is stressed as significant whether the same Isaiah saw beyond his time "to the days of the return" or a later prophet "in the spirit and faith of Isaiah" spoke to his own time. The headings summarize the biblical content in clear if somewhat conventional terms and should prove an effective guide for the general reader. The book as a whole seems better adapted to the somewhat conservative reader than to the sceptical and inquiring.

Keyes' book is rightly entitled *Story of the Bible World* rather than of the Bible. With attractive maps, a time chart and a hundred or more photographs, it aims to provide (without calling for undue effort on the part of the reader) a historical and geographical background for the Bible with some interpretation of the biblical content. The author is fond of referring to the opinion of "scholars," but many such will probably share the feeling of the reviewer that in the endeavor to suit all shades of opinion the author has provided one more illustration of Aesop's old fable.

The fundamentalist may enjoy reading that Abraham's father lived in a house of twenty or thirty rooms, that the Exodus was the greatest migration in history involving some 700,000 adult males and that Moses' farewells (three of them!) constitute the book of Deuteronomy. But he will not be equally pleased with the author's frequent use of "probably" and "traditionally" or with his readiness to reduce miracles to coincidental earthquakes and the like. And such concessions will certainly not satisfy the modernist. Nor will the correction of "king" (Dan. 5:1) to "prince and coregent" reconcile him to the exilic date given to the book of Daniel. The volume contains so much excellent material attractively presented that its awkward straddling and somewhat peculiar proportioning (Amos and Hosea together rate one page, Isaiah half a line; while sixteen pages are given to the Genesis stories and five to Herod) are the more to be regretted.

Professor Heim also has provided his readers with maps, a time chart and some interesting pictures. The book is planned for the use of young people of high school age and is intended to provide, in correlation with the Bible text, a modern substitute for the old "reading in course." A brief but challenging introduction precedes the lists of suggested readings for which vivid descriptive titles and occasional explanatory notes are provided. The books are kept in the order of the English Bible and a short comment on the character and purpose of each book as a whole sets the mood for the chosen readings. There is no attempt at complete coverage, but the selected passages are not only characteristic and readable but important in themselves. Obviously no two people would ever agree wholly in their choice of such selections, but there can be no doubt that the passages which Professor Heim has chosen are admirably suited to catch and hold the interest of young readers and also to give them a real knowledge of biblical thought and an appreciation of its value.

The general discussions are very brief — the book cannot possibly be used by the lazy as a substitute for the Bible itself — but they are frequently unconventional and always suggestive. Ezekiel "must be treated like an impressionist in painting." Daniel (the author, of course, dates the book 168-165 B.C.) is introduced by a reference to the fate of the Jews in Europe in this century.

As a teacher of college Bible, this reviewer could have asked nothing better than this book as a background for college work; and its regular use in a pastor's class preparing for church membership should some day result in a church of adults who could not be classed as "biblical illiterates." Professor Heim has fashioned an excellent tool to serve an immediate need. — *Louise Pettibone Smith, professor emeritus of biblical history, literature and interpretation, Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts.*

Philemon Among the Letters of Paul. *By John Knox. Abingdon. $2.00.*

THE publication of this revised edition of Professor Knox's discussion of the Epistle to Philemon (it originally appeared in 1935) is most welcome. The revision includes some amplification and clarification but no major changes. The closely knit and cumulative argument with which the author supports his view of the purpose of the letter and of the relations between Onesimus and the other persons concerned may not convince all readers. But the interpretation is both attractive and persuasive, and is well worth careful consideration.

The book is not of the sort which can be hastily skimmed, and readers who are prepared to give it real attention will be well rewarded. In the course of the argument, welcome light is thrown on the life and problems of the early Christian communities and on the beginnings of the development of the New Testament canon. Those who do not accept the specific interpretation of the letter will none the less enjoy the vivid presentation of Paul in his relations with his associates. Also, it should be noted that Professor Knox's interpretation is especially pertinent to our present need to establish "an unsegregated church in an unsegregated society." — *Louise Pettibone Smith.*

Worship in Ancient Israel. *(Number 5, Ecumenical Studies in Worship) By A. S. Herbert. John Knox . $1.50.*

IN THE brief compass of fifty pages we are given an astonishingly complete account of Israelite worship from the conquest of Canaan to the destruction of Herod's temple in 70 A.D. The material is presented topically with an abundance of biblical references.

Temple, sacrifice, the cultic functions of king, priest and prophet, prayer, ritual recital — even cultic dances are included. But the book is more than a scholarly summary of the available biblical material, with informative comparisons to the rites of Babylon and Ras Shamra. The opening chapter stresses the close interrelation between the concepts and practices of worship and the content of faith. What is distinctive in Israel "is not so much the practice as the meaning associated with the practice."

The author characterizes the faith of Israel as faith in "the Holy One" who yet paradoxically is "in the midst of Israel" and who is the ruler of history "righteous and yet gracious in all His ways." And the concluding chapter interprets and emphasizes the recurring warning of the prophets (a warning applicable to the Christian churches of today) against practices of worship which are intrinsically inconsistent with the content of faith. To all who believe that worship is an essential function of the church, this book is important. — *Louise Pettibone Smith.*

A Private House of Prayer. *By Leslie D. Weatherhead. Abingdon. $3.00.*

IN THE main this is a collection of prayers to be used for one full month and so divided as to take the pray-er on a daily tour through the seven rooms in this *Private House of Prayer.* The rooms are these: The Affirmation of Divine Presence; Adoration, Praise, and Thanksgiving; Confession, Forgiveness, Unloading; Positive Affirmation and Reception; Petition; Intercession; Meditation. The arrangement of the rooms is somewhat subjective and, being subjective, it is to that extent also somewhat arbitrary; however, it has the advantage of being a method and may therefore serve as an aid to prayer. It is not always apparent why some selections were chosen for certain specific rooms. With the choice of the prayer-poems so varied some of the selections were bound to be more philosophical than devotional. Some of them could even bear the superscription, "To the Unknown God," because they are hardly Christian in character, and altogether too vague to be adopted for Christian prayer use. We appreciated the rooms of "Intercession" and "Meditation." Besides being prayers of depth, they are gems of thought and expression. — *Ronald W. Goetsch, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Amherst, Wisconsin.*

Prayer Is the Secret. *By Reginald E. O. White. Harper. $2.75.*

THE purpose of this book is to help the Christians of today rediscover the power of prayer which was used so effectively by the Christians of the early apostolic church. "By prayer they tapped sources of power never so effectively drawn upon before, and found themselves more than conquerors." The premise of the author is that by prayer we too can discover that same source of power and vitality. "The Christian in prayer reaches out to a holy God, in the name of the all-perfect, immaculate Christ;" and as he prays, "he is bringing the pitcher of his soul to the well from which his life was drawn, to be refilled, renewed, refreshed, at the source of all energy and strength. . . . And when the prayer-empowering is shared in the corporate fellowship of other praying hearts, then anything can happen."

The author does not allow that prayer has a "reflex" value only, but he correctly insists that God hears and actually does things in answer to our prayers. "If we begin to suspect that the reflex influence of the prayer upon the pray-er is all there is to it, then we find it harder and harder to pray."

The author develops his theme in twelve chapters and sets out to show how *Prayer Is the Secret* of the vital phases of Christianity. These chapters contain many spiritual gems which cannot be mentioned in a brief review. To say that this is a good book

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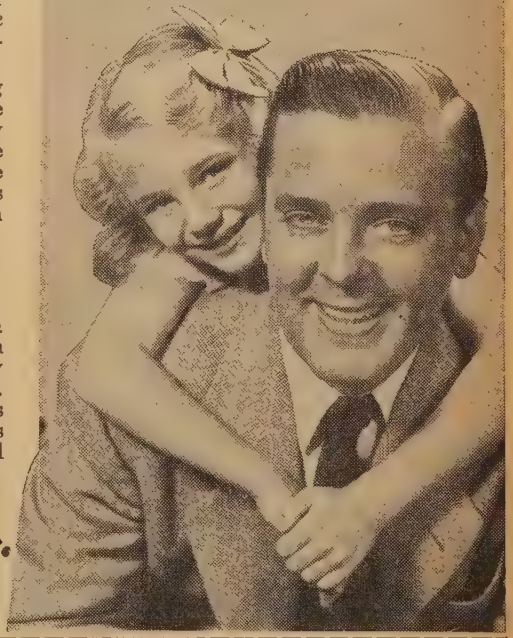

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does not say that we subscribe to every statement made within its pages. At times the author seems to ascribe to prayer a role which it really does not have. Prayer may be an aid to vital Christianity, but faith still remains its "secret." Prayer cannot substitute for faith, though it must remain the handmaiden and the evidence of faith. And to speak of prayer as being the secret of faith's reality in the sense that by prayer we begin to "feel" that these things are so, is losing sight of a danger to which the author himself calls attention when he states, "There is danger here of exaggeration, and of a too subjective and emotional emphasis." We cannot think of prayer as a means of grace. — *Ronald W. Goetsch.*

LET US PRAY: *A Book of Prayers for use in family worship, church schools and fellowships. Prepared by the Committee on Public Worship and Aids to Devotion of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Oxford University Press. $2.00.*

THIS is a book of prayers intended for use in families, schools and fellowships. The section of family prayers contains prayers for one full week, for holidays and festivals, for various occasions — both happy and sad — as well as a brief ceremony for the hallowing (dedication) of a house or a manse. On the whole they are prayers of beauty and depth. In a few instances they are designed specifically for Christians living in the British Commonwealth. The prayer for "After Holy Communion" emphasizes the spiritual presence rather than the real presence. — *Ronald W. Goetsch.*

A CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION OF MARRIAGE. *By Henry A. Bowman. Westminster. $2.50.*

COMMON SENSE IN MARRIAGE. *By Herbert A. Streeter. Warner Press. $2.50.*

IN ALL LOVE AND HONOR. *By Scudder M. Parker. Abingdon. $2.95.*

IT'S ALL IN THE FAMILY. *By Joseph R. Hestenes. Augsburg. $3.00.*

THESE four books demonstrate the two popular forms of writing about the family. Parker and Hestenes employ the "Let me tell you what happened" or storytelling mode. Bowman and Streeter are more of the "Let me tell you" or didactic writers. In each class one of the two men carries the thing off while the other demonstrates that even with the old standard brand you can sometimes find a lemon.

Henry Bowman teaches sociology at the University of Texas and is author of the most helpful book, *Marriage for Moderns.* In this new volume he is obviously sharing with his reading audience his classroom material on marriage and the family. I would especially recommend it to any who counsel college students as good material to deflate the rationalizations regarding sex held by some "sophomore sophisticates."

Where Bowman succeeds, Streeter fails. There is such a thing as common sense which is too common. *Common Sense in Marriage* is strictly "non-U." What strengths this book seems to have soon prove to be weaknesses. It does have practical suggestions, but bogs down in casuistry and pedantry.

In the family anecdote department, Scudder Parker has written a delightful book. The experience of sharing in the ups and downs of the Parker family would enrich a couple's own personal relationships.

Hestenes' *It's All in the Family* is a fine book too but when you compare it with the Parker book it is evident immediately which one appeared in the *Ladies' Home Journal* and which one in a denominational paper. (Denominational editors please note.) With four books in just this single batch it is obvious that there are many books about families. You cannot possibly buy all that are printed. But if you are going to buy only one this year, buy Scudder Parker's. You will be richer for having read it. — *Joseph D. Ban, Director, Mission to the Academic Community, New York, N. Y.*

SEGREGATION AND DESEGREGATION: *A Christian Approach. By T. B. Maston. Macmillan. $3.50.*

HERE is a practical and timely book. The author approaches segregation and desegregation from a rational Christian viewpoint and utilizes the Christian ideal as the measuring stick to judge racial practices and procedures.

The author begins with the Supreme Court decision, the occasion for it, its content and background. The decision itself is given in Appendix A so that the reader can study the legal wording as it was rendered. The Supreme Court action of May 31, 1955, interpreting the decision, is given in Appendix B.

An important feature of the treatise is the author's attempt to define terms that many of us use loosely and glibly. He makes a distinction between "separation" and "segregation," between "desegregation" and "integration." Since a part of the racial problem is caused by people using these terms indiscriminately, Dr. Maston is right in arguing that they should have definitive content known to those who use them.

The best part of the book comes in the closing chapters in which the author discusses various facets of segregation and desegregation in relationship to the cardinal principles of the Christian faith. The author is professor of ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas. Even though a southern Baptist, his concept of Christ, the nature of God and the Christian church are essentially ecumenical and inclusive. His interpretation of the Scriptures is as sound for an ecumenical approach to religion as it is to desegregation. With its solid and comprehensive content and lucid style, this significant book deserves careful reading and prayerful study by every sincere person concerned about Christian race relations anywhere in the world. — *J. Edward Lantz, National Council of Churches, Atlanta, Georgia.*

THE GOSPEL OF MARK: *Its Making and Meaning. By Curtis Beach. Harper. $2.25.*

SEVERAL points are made by Dr. Beach in his short discussion of the Gospel of Mark. Two seem to be significant. He feels that the mood and structure of Mark's Gospel is similar to Greek tragic drama. A second point is that Mark is a theological or evangelical message set forth in the form of a dramatic narrative. The brief commentary on the five sections of the Gospel pursues this idea.

The author follows Enslin in describing Mark as one who "used his materials with literary imagination, to express his own religious faith." The second chapter expresses a theory of the growth of early Christian theology which locates the development in the early church. At various places one would raise questions. How does one know the gospel story circulated in Aramaic, Jesus' own tongue? On page 32, someone ought to ask a question about the purpose of the gospel being to give members of the Christian fellowship in Rome fortitude to face persecution.

There are too many assumptions in the work. The author has answered some questions which he may not have the information to answer. The absence of documentation causes some problems for the reader. — *Thomas R. Shrout, School of Religion, University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri.*

JESUS IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN. *By T. C. Smith. Broadman. $4.00.*

WILLIAM MANSON states in the foreword that the thesis of this book is "that the Gospel was written as an apology for Christianity addressed to the unbelieving Jews of the Evangelist's age." Dr. Smith affirms that the Fourth Gospel reflects a Palestinian milieu because of similar ideas and phrases found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Because of internal evidence the Gospel is to be dated between 90-95 A.D. The format of the book is to deal with the Gospel in thematic chapters, *i. e.,* The Word Became Flesh, Rejection in Judea, etc. In the discussion, a wealth of Jewish material is cited.

There are three questions to be raised about the book. Does Dr. Smith intend for the reader to gain the impression that the Fourth Gospel is a product of its writer? Does the Gospel contain the ipsissma verba of *Jesus?* Are the ideas found in the Gospel contemporary to the time of writing or are they earlier? — *Thomas R. Shrout.*

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Stendahl, Krister: A Parable of Jesus (June)

Sermons

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Albright, William E., Jr.: The Theology of Laughter (Aug.)
Bachman, John W.: The Giving of Thanks (Nov.)
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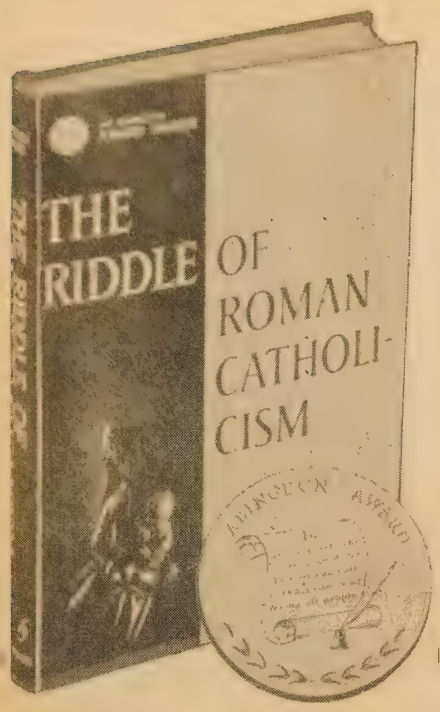

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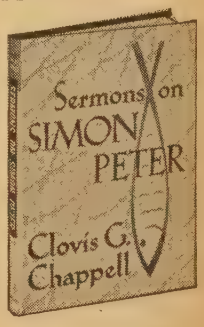

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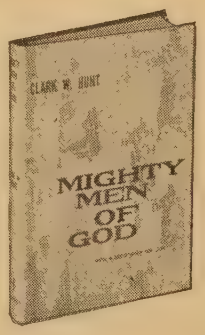

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